XIO3

GCACE

Garden City Atari Computer Enthusiasts
1003 Amphion St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4G2

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996

September 26th Meeting!

The general meeting this month will feature more hints and tips from John Towler. He finds many little programs which can be run as accessories to make your ST run smoother and more efficiently. This would also be a good time to bring any questions regarding your computer, as John has a lot of knowledge through years of experience with Atari computers.

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ATARI®
NEWS AND RUMOURS

by Rowland Grant

Atari vanished! As usual I checked Atari's stock prices in the Financial Post. The American Stock Exchange listing of ATC for July 30th showed trades just above the $5.00 level. For July 31st and thereafter, Atari was gone from the list. Here's what happened. Sometime in July, the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) gave its approval for the merger of Atari Corp and JTS Peripherals. Next, Atari had to get the formal approval of those holding the majority of its shares. A special shareholders meeting was held on July 30th at 9.00 a.m. in the law office of Wilson Sonsini in Palo Alto California. Obviously they didn't expect much of a turnout, and that's what they got. Less than twenty people attended, but they represented most of Atari's shares. The meeting started out with a reading of a summary of the terms of the merger. This was followed by a vote and adjournment. Atari was disposed of in less than 30 minutes. There were questions about the fate of the Jaguar inventory and other Atari assets. However, the ex-Atari executives replied, "It's in JTS' hands now. We have nothing to do with it". Upon the closing of the merger, JTS exchanged one share of JTS common stock for each outstanding Atari share. Approximately 64 million JTS shares were exchanged. JTS has about 104 million shares outstanding. So on July 31st AMEX delisted Atari and listed JTS. Atari shareholders now have about sixty percent of JTS. But now the Tramiels do not have a controlling interest.

I might be inclined to say that it's a good thing too, but I won't. The Tramiels seem to be relieved to be out of it. Perhaps the magnitude of their failure is greater than suspected. I understand that the last report to shareholders included a statement that 135 thousand Jaguar units were sold in all. This is an incredible figure. We have statements attributed to Sam Tramiel that 150 thousand Jaguar units had been sold way back in January 1995. Another figure of 200 thousand was given out a year ago. Estimates from various reports have ranged up to 400 thousand units. Is the current figure a mistake? Did they lie to us? Well, it's too late to ask about it now.

Atari shareholders may have gone from the frying pan to the fire. While the new JTS shares showed a brief uptick

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are $25 per family per year. Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter, access to over 300 8-bit public domain disks and 190 ST disks and increased time and upload/download ratio on the club BBS, Pothole. It can be reached by modem at (604) 642-6795.

MEETINGS

Meetings will be held in the Nellie McClung branch of the Library at 3950 Cedar Hill Road (corner of McKenzie) on the fourth Thursday of each month. All meetings are at 7 pm. There is no meeting in the month of December.

EDITORIAL

I sent Doug Skrecky e-mail asking if he had an article for this issue. He sent 3, of which two were Christmas song parodies. I don't have enough moxie to try and foist off Christmas articles on you this early, so I went with the third article. It sounded familiar to me, so I went through old newsletters looking for it, but I couldn't see it anywhere. If it has appeared previously, kindly accept my apologies. The article isn't too current, in that Atari Corporation was still in business when Doug wrote the piece , but it is an interesting solution to the troubles Atari had at the time.

John Towler is back from his brief holiday in New York and will have the first Disk of the Month ready for the September 26th general meeting. He will get the disk from public domain software which has been uploaded to Genie, the online service. Bring $2 to the meeting and you can have a copy to take home.

Gord

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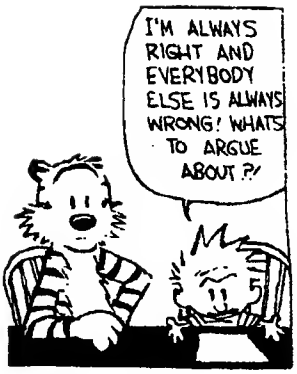
PEEKing Around

by Gordon F. Hooper



... Welcome to new member RYAN KLASCHINSKI, who is attending the University of Victoria. Being a typical starving student, he needed a computer at a reasonable price, and ended up with a 520 ST and colour monitor for $12 at a garage sale. JOE DZIEWULSKI of Duncan recently renewed his corresponding membership. Joe and his wife managed to get down for one of our monthly meetings this year, we look forward to seeing them again ... The only thing JOHN PICKEN is starving for is more beer. Actually, he probably had enough the night he trashed all of the Pothole BBS's hard drives. Fortunately for BOB NEX and the rest of us users, John managed to get back in the hard drive and restore his devastation. I particularly need the BBS as that is how all the articles which appear in XIO3 get to me. I can remember the first time I was editor and I drove around town to pick up disks with the articles on them. Then I thought I'd died and gone to Pig Heaven when I got my first Atari XM301 modem. Yep, a screaming 300 bits per second. Now when I see advertisements for the new modems, my 14,400 bps Supra seems slow ... DOUG SKRECKY came over from Smog City on the mainland to visit his brother TED. Too bad it was the day they found two people murdered less than a block from Ted's condo. I guess the Cyber-Brothers had to lay low until the police left the neighbourhood ... JOHN TOWLER is spending the week of September 9th in New York. I hope he avoids muggers, because he is scheduled to do the demonstration at the meeting on the 26th. He also volunteered to keep his eye on Genie to find some new PD software to put on the disk of the month. You'll get it at the monthly meetings for only $2, before it's added to the club catalogue. You cheap guys can therefore wait ... ROWLAND GRANT mentioned at the last executive meeting that Atari news is getting hard to find. This can be seen by how short his News and Rumours column is getting. At least it makes the newsletter skinnier. He is thinking about combining Rumours with ST News to make a decent length column. I feel that the TOS computers will probably have new software written for it for at least a couple of years yet, along the lines of the Atari 8-bit. There are still people writing software for it, like John Picken and others like him around the world. There is not much being written, but it tends to be high quality when it does come out. The ST will remain viable as long as new software comes along for it and it does whatever it is you require of your computer ... CRAIG CARMICHAEL has started advertising Oases, his new operating system. The ad was in the latest Current Notes and is coming out in the new magazine from England, Atari Computing ... I haven't seen any messages from MARK ERICKSON in Courtenay on the Pothole lately. Maybe being banished to the boonies leaves you with nothing of significance to say 8-) .. As usual, I appeal to you to do my spying for me. Call Gord at 475-0857 with all the choice dirt on GCACE members ...

The Good Ship Atari

by Doug Skrecky

Atari is going down for the count. It needs a saviour and I nominate me. Yup, stand aside Sam & Jack, you've had your chance - now its mine. Here's how I propose to refloat the good ship Atari.

First of all you have to manufacture what consumers really want instead of what you delude yourself into thinking that they should want. If you do the later you start going belly up. This explains the current situation guys.

Home computers are not and never have been what the masses want. Manufacture home computers and you wind up like Coleco, Texas Instruments, etc. Most home computers have never been profitable for a very good reason. The majority of home computer owners buy them just to play games on them. Word processing and other such pursuits are the hobbies of only a few weirdos, who in any case are well served by buying more serious "office" computers which feature things like hard drives, software compatibility with other office machines, etc. In any case what the home computer buyer usually wants is a game machine pure and simple. Game machine manufacturers make money because they are selling something the public really wants. Home computer manufacturers have to price down their machines to compete and can not usually make any profit as a result. Either make game machines for the masses or office computers for corporations. Forget home computers.

Add a hard disk to an ST and you have an incompatible office computer which virtually no responsible corporation would buy. Add Unix capability and you have an expensive maybe that might sell provided that developing it doesn't bankrupt our corporation in the first place. For a quick buck nothing is likely to be as profitable as stripping the ST down to produce a minimum cost game machine, which requires special cartridges which software developers licence from us. By minimum cost I mean just that. No keyboard, no laser gun, no printer ports and only the absolute minimum amount of ram needed to run cartridges - say about 100 K or so? Take care to ensure the ST game machine actually runs ST games with little or no modification. If it doesn't you start out with an orphan games console that might or might not ever catch on. This is the last roll of the dice guys - make it a good one. Class dismissed.

Postscript:

Instead of repackaging the ST as a cheap games console Atari continued to flog the ST aka the Falcon as an expen-

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above $5 when the merger went through, it has been down hill since, with recent trades in the $3 range. The hard drive market is very difficult. JTS sells to computer makers who can pick and choose nowadays. While some contracts for the JTS slim drives have been announced, the market for them seems to be rather small and specialised. Even Seagate, the hard drive industry leader, will be manufacturing 1GB cartridges for IOMega's new Jazz drive. IOMega seems to have captured the public's attention. Cheap, very high capacity removable disks may be the preferred storage medium in the near future.

And what will JTS do with Atari's unsold stock of Jaguar systems (rumoured to be at least ten thousand units)? The staff of the Atari division of JTS has been reduced to four, not enough to do much. There have been suggestions that the four are Jack, Sam, Leonard and Garry. Apparently not. The Tramiels are gone. Jack did turn up at the office to help clean up old business, but he had no say in the day to day operations. I understand that John Skrutch is (or was) the North American operations manager for the Atari division. He reported to Bob Gleadow in the UK, who in turn, reported to the JTS management in California. This arrangement may have been changed. Recently, the office that Atari rented has been closed. The three remaining Atari employees in the US have been moved to the JTS head office. There are rumours that they have been assigned duties that are not entirely related to prior Atari business. The function and status of Bob Gleadow in the UK is unknown.

There have been persistent rumours that there are buyers for the Jaguar technology, but nothing more definite. Then there is the intriguing posting by Peter Curry of Pacific Software Supply, requesting the fax numbers of independent video dealers in the U.S. He seems to be trying to re-establish a distribution network for Jaguar consoles and games. Peter ends his message with: "if there ever was a time where your input made a difference it is now." Peter Curry is not doing this on his own. He must have the blessing of JTS, since he now answers the old Atari phone number 1-800-GO ATARI. Most of the chain distributors who have not already dropped the Jaguar intend to do so by the end of the year. They will need the shelf space for the new Nintendo 64 game machine due for release this fall. Atari depended mostly on the chain stores for its sales. Unless a new network of outlets can be established, and soon, the Jaguar will be truly dead.

The owners of Jaguar game consoles seem to have been left in the lurch. Atari computer owners will not be surprised. There is some possibility that the Jaguar might continue as a hobby project at least. Last year, there was news of a Jaguar developers kit that would be available for a very modest price. The developers kit from Atari sold for about $5500 and its distribution was restricted. It was out of the question for hobbyists. Now the Jaguar Server Development Kit is available for $190 US. The kit consists of a card that plugs into the cartridge port of a ST/TT/Falcon computer. The card is connected to a Jaguar game console through a ribbon cable. The Jaguar console

requires some minor modifications to bypass the encryption lock. Jaguar games can be programmed on the ST using a regular 68000 assembler. The latest version of the kit also includes an assembler for the Jaguar's RISC chips. Using the special programs provided in the kit, the game (or other types of software for that matter) can be loaded into the 2MB of RAM in the Jaguar, where it will run. With this setup, new Jaguar games could be exchanged as compressed disk files or put on CD ROMs. The Jaguar could live on through shareware (a couple of games are already available). This sounds like fun, at least for talented game hackers. From another point of view, the Jaguar Server card enlarges the scope of TOS computers considerably. Possibly the Jaguar could become a standard ST peripheral. Atari may have given up, but others could use Jaguar technology and existing parts to create a new series of advanced TOS computers.

A few Jaguar games may yet appear. Sinister Developments is said to be working on a Jaguar version of their game Slam Racer. Also Ocean may release Worms. Apparently Ocean offered the game to Atari 19 month ago, but Atari turned them down. JV Enterprises insists that Towers II will be available. However, Telegames is publishing Towers II, and they say that at least 6000 cartridges must be sold to make the effort worth while. Towers II may be used to test the market. If it sells well, Telegames might consider other Jaguar titles. They are reluctant though. There are rumours that the game Fight for Life, which was released last April, sold only about one thousand copies. Two Jaguar games were exhibited at the MIST Atarifest in Indianapolis. These were Atari's unreleased Breakout 2000 and 4play's long awaited Battlesphere. While Battlesphere seemed to be complete and finished, Tom Harker said that they wanted to add a few more features before releasing it. I understand that Tom is putting up the funds to publish the game. Is he waiting to see what effect the JTS merger will have on the remaining Jaguar market? Just a thought. Anyway, if they don't release Battlesphere soon, they might as well forget about it. Of course, none of these games can be published without the approval of JTS. I understand that John Skrutch, now in charge of licensing Atari assets, is cooperating with the independent publishers. There are rumours that John is behind the efforts to revive the Jaguar's marketing and distribution.

Don Thomas, one of Atari's last employees, resigned from Atari/JTS and accepted a position at Sony. Don will be joining others from Atari in Sony's Playstation division. He seemed to be on good terms with the Tramiels and was not critical of them. However he did say that Atari did not have the resources to put out a new product like the Jaguar in today's market. In fact he intimated that Atari was dying before the Tramiels became involved. They did manage to keep Atari alive for more than a decade, and they introduced some excellent products. Don suggested that if Atari had aimed at niche markets it might still be around. Instead they tried to conquer the world. Well, Atari Corp is gone. Its money is gone. But what will happen to Atari's other assets? That is the one question remaining.

TRS 80 Emulator For Atari!

by Rowland Grant

In July, Future Publishing gave notice that it would drop ST Format magazine. ST Format was the remaining ST magazine in English that was printed in colour on glossy paper. It was one of the few ST magazines that still turned up on newsstands. Issue 85 for September 1996 is the last one. The magazine had become rather thin in recent months, and there was little advertising. I was able to see a copy of ST Format issue 86, all 52 pages of it. The staff had been given enough warning, and they made sure that the magazine closed down in style. It wasn't long ago that we heard that ST Format had been guaranteed a further year of production. Well, I guess it wasn't making enough for the owner to keep the promise.

When Future Publications bought ST Review and merged it with ST Format, some of the staff of ST Review started Atari World. The new Atari World was quite popular and may have succeeded. However Compo, its financial backer, went into receivership. But the Atari community in Britain is not quitting. Mike Kerslake, a magazine publisher with fifteen years experience, has launched a new magazine called Atari Computing. He has signed up Frank Charlton, previously with ST Format and Joe Connor, from Atari World as editors. Atari Computing will comprise sixty pages, without colour or glossy paper. It will be distributed by mail on a subscription basis. I expect that Atari Computing will look much like Atari Applications and Current Notes. The first issue is planned to be out late in September this year. It will be on display at the Atari shows in Birmingham and London. Atari computing is backed financially by the Atari Computing Group. This seems to have been organized through the online networks. A sample issue of Atari Computing will cost 4 pounds (UK) delivered to North America. Add 2 pounds to get the reader disk. A three issue subscription is also available for 12 pounds. Recently Mike Kerslake reported that all the advertising space has been sold, so I guess that the first issue of Atari Computing is assured.

There is little that is new in TOS software just lately. However, there is enough life in the market to stimulate upgrades. For instance, Gribnif Software is advertising for beta testers for new versions of the current products. At the moment they are working on new patches for the Geneva multi-tasker. This is to be followed by a major new release. Gribnif is also continuing to improve Neodesk, STalker, STeno and CardFile. From another source, Positive Image is a photographic image processing and retouching system. Not long after it appeared in North America, the publisher (Floppy Shop) issued a new and much improved version. Positive Image 1.1 has been optimized to give much faster screen redraws in 256 colour mode. Printing now takes one third of the time that it did with version 1.0, and of course bugs have been fixed. I notice that Computer Direct of Edmonton is the North American agent for Positive Image.

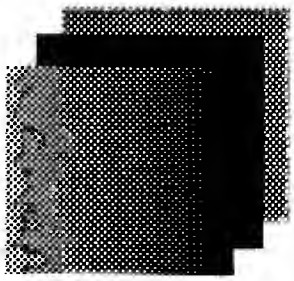
Gemulator, the ST emulator for fast PC's has been upgraded further to version 4.15. This version includes support for the MagiC operating system. A special board containing TOS in ROM is no longer needed. Branch Always Software is offering a package including MagiC 2.0 and Gemulator. Later versions of MagiC will work too. Branch Always Software has a new name: EMULATORS INC. Under the new company name, Dareck Mihocka will develop and market emulators for Atari and other computers. Is a Macintosh emulator for PC's next? For those interested in capturing the past, Sander Berents has put out a TRS-80 III emulator for TOS computers. This PD software includes the operating system NEWDOS/80 and a selection of programs in machine language and BASIC. It is supplied in virtual disk format.

Calamus has been called the best desk top publisher for the ST, or for any platform. MGI Software in Canada bought the rights to Calamus, and has issued moderate cost versions for PC's using Windows and for Macintosh computers. Apparently, PC users are beginning to recognize the virtues of Calamus. The Windows version of Calamus has been in great demand. MGI has had to expand its premises twice in the last six months to handle the sales. There is a rumour that MGI is planning one more major upgrade of Calamus for TOS computers. Although from comments I have heard, they prefer that we buy the Windows version.

The publishers of Protext word processor went out of business. However there have been rumours that the creators of Protext have continued to upgrade the software and may release it as shareware. Protext was available for most major platforms including the ST. It worked through command line and drop down menus, like many popular word processors for DOS computers. Protext does not use GEM, but it has a very fast text handler and many useful features. Protext was not too popular among users expecting GEM or Windows type operation. As Windows began to dominate the PC, Protext gradually lost its PC market. And of course the decline of the ST and Amiga markets finished it.

I notice that most of the new games for TOS computers seem to be for the Falcon. Cyberstrider in Manchester have done a Defender clone called "Spice". New Beat Development will be publishing "Willy's Adventures", which is somewhat like the Jaguar game Rayman. Also Toad Computers is selling a CD-ROM disk called "Bird of Prey". It was prepared by Floating Fish Studios, and the CD-ROM contains more than 21 thousand files of Falcon friendly software.

In the last couple of years there have been major Atari-only computer shows in Canada, U.S.A., Britain, Germany, France, and Sweden. The latest one, called Atari Days, will be held in Torino Italy, November 16th to 18th. This show is being organized by Emmesoft, a major source of TOS computer products in Italy. Most of the major software and hardware sources will be represented at Atari Days. There will be a contest for the best music compositions created using Atari computers. Computers shows of this kind are essential for keeping software and hardware makers interested in TOS computers. There are few opportunities otherwise for them to display their wares. The organizers of these shows deserve thanks from the whole Atari user community.



Something else to do with your good old Atari! *by Larry Eggleton (VE7JQH)*

"Ham" radio people and computers have had a love affair right from the moment when small personal computers became affordable. We are born tinkerers and are irresistibly attracted to electronic gadgets. From this beginning the present day "packet" radio network has grown.

Amateur packet radio uses the serial (modem) port of the computer, the one generally used to connect a telephone modem. In my installation, the computer is an ATARI 520ST (upgraded to 1 meg). Instead of the telephone modem, a Terminal Node Controller (TNC) is connected to the modem port. The TNC is, in effect, a multi-mode modem, but instead of being connected to a telephone line on its other side, there are two audio-frequency (AF) ports. One of the ports is for VHF radios and the other for high-frequency (HF) radios (formerly called "short-wave").

The main reason for having separate ports for VHF and HF is that each uses a different AF mod/demod system for transmission and reception of the radio signal. VHF uses a narrow-band FM modulation, while HF uses single side band (SSB), which is a type of AM. The AF modulation is in the form of two tones, one representing logic 0, and the other logic 1. When heard, it sounds very much like that nasty screechy sound that your telephone modem makes when connecting.

Another reason for separate ports is connected with the band-width of the VHF and HF channels. Since at VHF there is more band-width available than at HF, it is possible to transmit signals at a higher speed on the VHF channels. At HF, transmission is limited to 300 Baud, but at VHF the usual speed is 1200 Baud, with some channels operating at 9600 Baud. Most amateur packet radio activity on VHF is in the band from 144 MHz to 148 MHz, but there is quite a lot of activity on the UHF bands allotted for ham radio (220 MHz and 440 MHz). The HF amateur radio channels are grouped in bands between 1.7 to 30 MHz, and are used mainly for long range communications. Although VHF has only a short range (theoretically line-of-sight), an extensive network of repeater stations has grown up over the 15 years or so that amateur packet radio has been operating.

Each of the AF ports has a transmit and receive line (carrying the AF signals to and from the transmitter and receiver) and a control line to switch the radio transceiver between send and receive modes. The TNC can receive AF simultaneously on both HF and VHF ports, which it converts from AF to data and stores in its receive buffer. The link between the TNC and the computer is RS232 configuration and is usually set at a higher speed (I use 4800 baud) than the data from the radios. When the data is displayed on the screen, the TNC adds an identifier /V for VHF or /H for HF so that you'll know on which port each message arrived.

The TNC will also operate with almost any ordinary telephone terminal modem software, but terminal programs written specifically for packet radio have special features, such as automatic calling, storage of received messages, message-activated printout, etc. When you first connect your TNC, you enter the command MYCALL and your radio callsign (I'm VE7JQH). Once this is done, any time you transmit to another packet station, the TNC automatically identifies you by adding your call to your message. Sets of standard commands for use on amateur packet networks have been developed, and there is a large number of BBSs both locally and abroad that can be logged onto by using these commands.

To connect to a packet network, I select the VHF or HF port to transmit on, then enter the command C (for Connect request), followed by the callsign of the local packet repeater station (in this area VE7DIE). When the repeater replies, I will see the message "Connected to VE7DIE at xx:xx hrs." at the top of my screen, then after a few seconds, a "Welcome to..." greeting appears, followed by a menu of about 35 commands, giving me access to the various features available on the network. My own call sign has been automatically transmitted by my TNC when I sent the C, so the repeater knows who I am. On the first contact, the repeater asks me for my name and other details, which are recorded so that on subsequent contacts, the "greeting" says "Hallo Larry, welcome to...etc." A very interesting command is G (for Gateway), which gives me access to other menus, through which I can log onto other BBSs across Canada, the USA, Europe and as far as Moscow. All using a little VHF radio you can hold in your hand, and a small antenna on my balcony about 19 inches long.

The format used in amateur packet radio is based on the X.25 data transmission protocol used in telephone communications. It is referred to as AX.25 (amateur X.25) because it has some modified fields, such as the callsigns just mentioned, and other fields which contain routing information for the repeater stations in the amateur packet network.

The TNC is a very versatile piece of equipment. It has a repertoire of abut 150 commands that can be entered from the keyboard to set operating parameters or to select different modes. As well as the packet radio mode just described, the TNC can send and receive Morse code, Teletype and ASCII characters as well as receive weather fax (WEFAX) transmissions. All messages are displayed on the screen and all transmissions are sent by typing. It is quite fascinating to be typing on your keyboard and hearing your message going out in Morse code.

The terminal program I use is called PACK-ET-TERM and was written specially for the Atari ST for ham use by Charles W. Harrington, who is a Florida ham operator with the call sign of WA4GPF. I find the display on this program to be nice and clear, and it has a very good set of features. A copy will shortly be in the G.C.A.C.E disk library. Another program called HOSTMASTER operates with DOS. Since I recently acquired a SuperCharger DOS emulator, I have had the opportunity to try out this program. It is quite good, but is not as versatile as PACK-ET-TERM, which I use most of the time.

So, that's something else to do with your old Atari. I've had a lot of fun using

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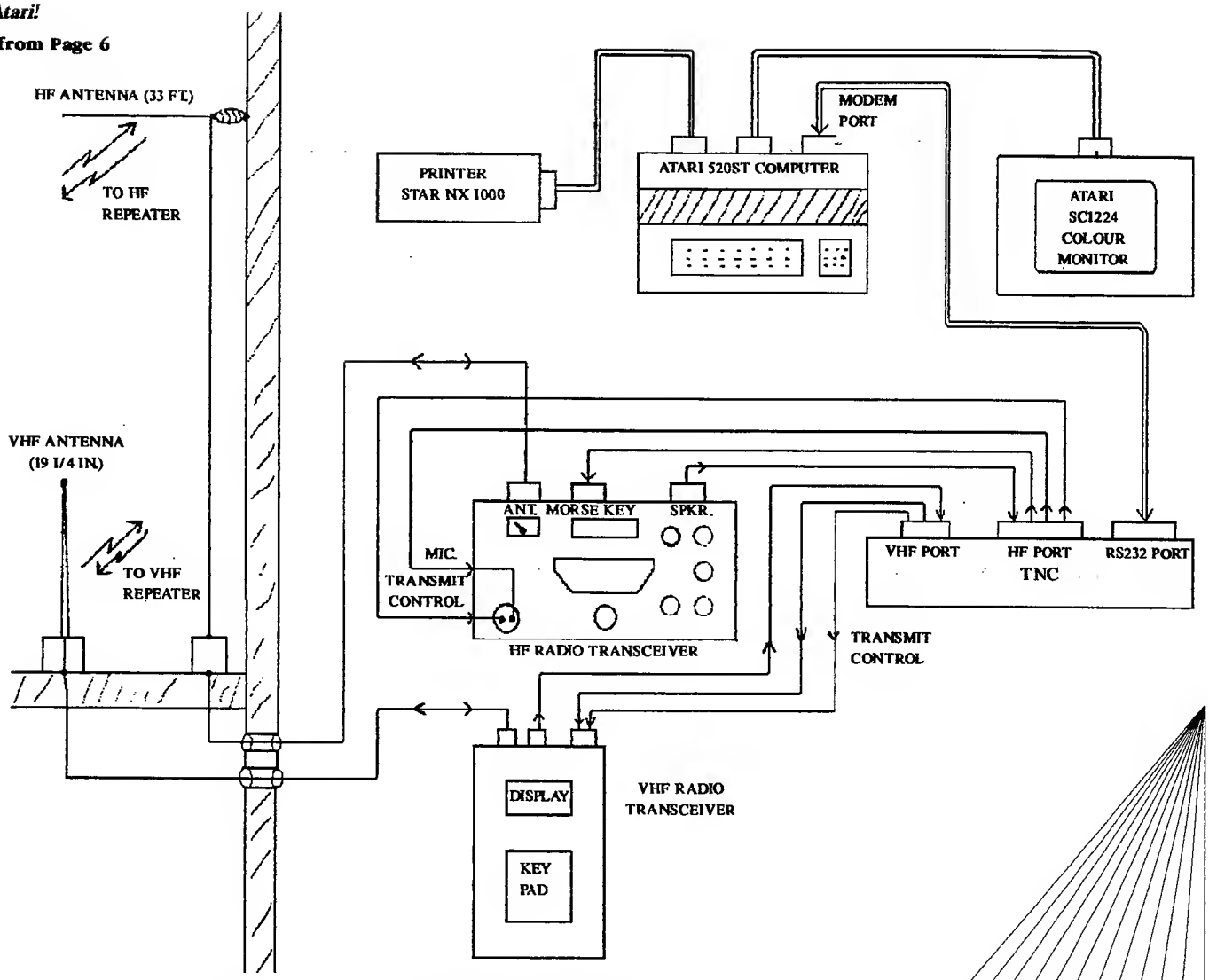
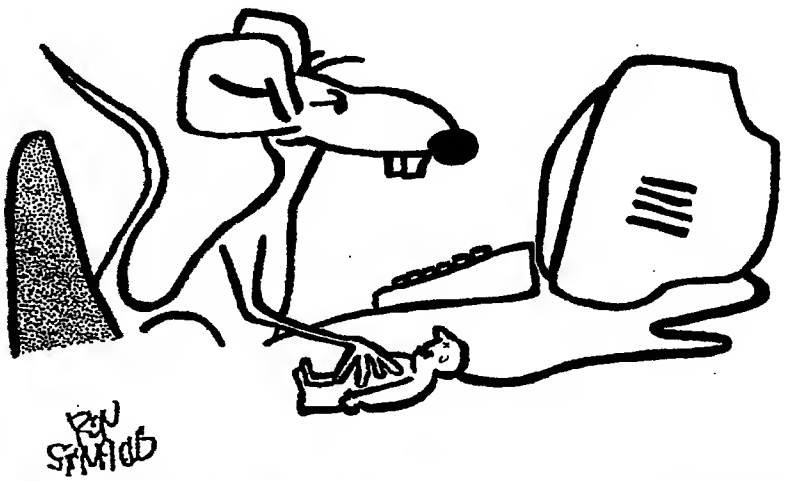


it in packet radio mode. There still many features of the packet network that I haven't got around to trying out yet. I belong to a ham radio club that specializes in this fascinating field, and every meeting I find out something new. Each local packet repeater station is financed by subscriptions from their club and all are interconnected by radio links to form this huge network, comparable to a "ham" internet. Some packet stations are already linked with the telephone Internet, but I haven't been able to make contact yet. I haven't seen them, but I understand that there are quite a number of ham radio pages on the Internet already. Ham radio has always had strong connections with emergency services, and VE7DIE, our local packet repeater, is located in the Provincial Emergency Plan (PEP) building on Boleskine Road. There is also a link to VE7SEP, the Saanich Emergency Plan station located at the Saanich Municipal building on Vernon Avenue. I could go on for ever about packet radio, but have to stop somewhere. If anyone would like to know more about this, I'd be glad to talk to them about it. You do need an Amateur radio licence to operate a transmitter on these radio frequencies, which involves passing technical and code tests, but you can monitor and observe what goes on without a licence.

Ham radio has strong connections to emergency services ...



Lots of PC Power Needed to Emulate Atari 800!

by Rowland Grant

Old Atari 8-bit magazines are not easily found nowadays. However they may all be available on internet if Kevin Savetz achieves his goal. Kevin has launched the Digital Antic Project. He has obtained permission from the holder of the Antic copyrights to post the whole magazines on his web site. Currently he has prepared the complete text of the first two issues of Antic, complete with cover art and memorable ads. The pages of Antic are scanned using OCR to make text files of the pages. The covers and other images arc being scanned into JPEG format. All this is organised to work under HTML. Kevin is calling for volunteers to help in the task. The site of the Antic project has been given as http://www.northcoast.com/savetz/antic/dap.html .

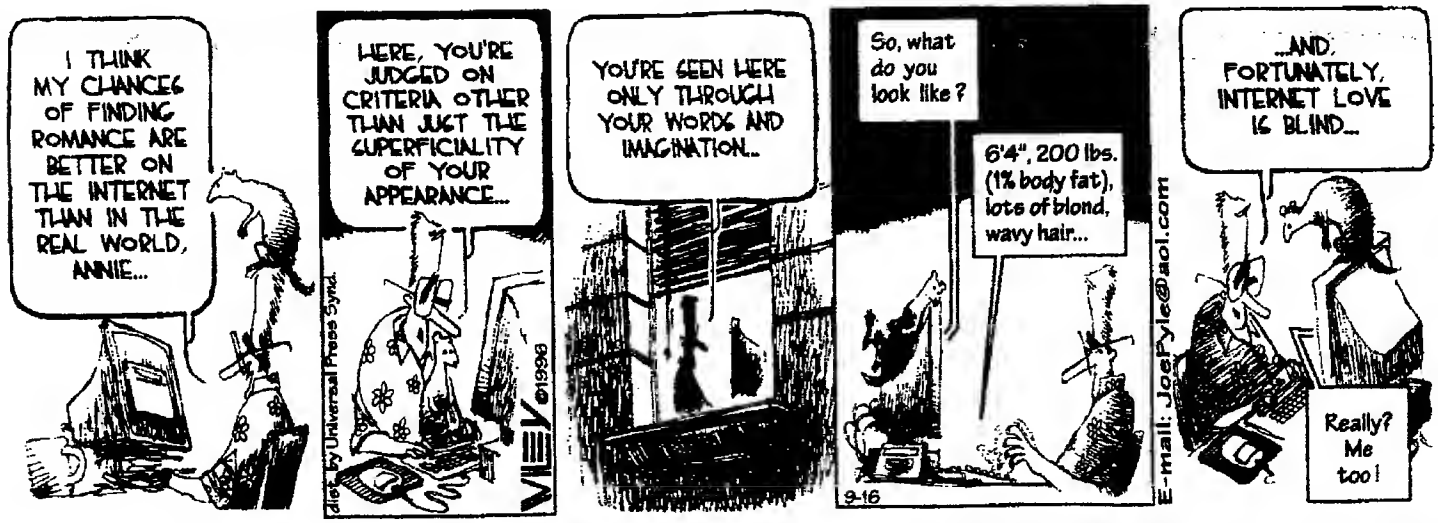
Bob Wooley has surfaced and is promising another issue of Atari Classics, when (as he says) he finishes fooling around with IDE hard drives. According to Bob, the IDE type hard drive is much easier for Atari 8-bit computers to handle. A very simple interface using one HC138 chip and a small amount of code is all that is required to run an IDE drive of recent manufacture. Bob promises to publish articles on how he installed an IDE drive inside the case of his Atari 1200XL. He will also include an article (and code listing I hope) on his updated SmartOS which he now calls SmartIDE. The system can read the hard drive at a rate of 180 sectors per second.

There are rumours that Mike Hohman of Fine Tooned Engineering is still living in or near Phoenix Arizona. However he must be moving around as his telephone numbers seem to go out of service fairly regularly. According to a newsletter that was sent to some customers last year, Mike invested over $50,000 in his business. He claimed to be just scraping by on shareware fees from Sparta DOS. I suspect that Mike has found other employment. Considering the time Mike has taken on his Atari hardware projects, we may not hear anything from him soon, or ever.

There are Atari 8-bit emulators everywhere. Mike Hill has released a new freeware Atari emulator called Pokey. It emulates the Atari 5200 game machine as well as Atari 800/800XL computers. Pokey runs on a Pentium PC under MSDOS. The current system is a beta version. Mike Hill is requesting comments. Pokey emulates Atari 8-bit graphics well, but sound support is lacking as is speed. A lot of power is needed to emulate the several microprocessors of the Atari 800. Another 8-bit emulator by Markus Gietzen is called XL-it! This is also under development. Markus managed to emulate sound, but everything ran very slowly. The latest version has managed to get the emulation up to speed. These emulators seem to run best under MSDOS. However, Chris Lam has updated his 8-bit emulator to run under Windows 95/NT and named it Rainbow 95. Rainbow requires a file containing the Atari 800 operating system. According to reports, Rainbow is a rather slow and somewhat incomplete emulator. PC Xformer, a commercial product, has had the most development. PC Xformer version 4.0 for Windows 95 is not quite ready for release. The current DOS version of PC Xformer has been judged to be somewhat faster than its rivals, but sound emulation is minimal. None of these emulators will run all Atari 8-bit software. XL-it! may be the most compatible, followed by PC Xformer. If you have a powerful PC, it might be fun to run an Atari 8-bit emulator. But if you really want to use Atari 8-bit software, why not get a real Atari computer? They're still available, and they are inexpensive.

For those of you who prefer your Antic magazines in hard copy, the club has the complete set in its library. We also have many duplicates which are free to members. Phone Gord at 475-0857 to come over and look at them.

US & THEM

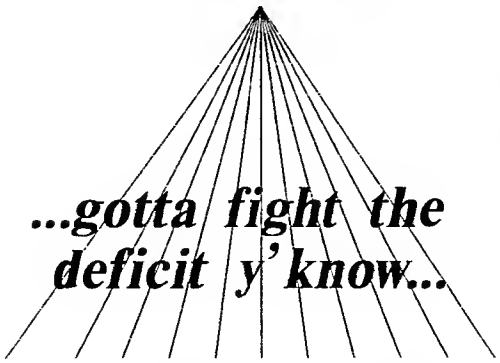


Disk of the Month

by Rowland Grant

At the July General Meeting Craig Carmichael showed his latest version of OMEn, now called OASES. Craig has added a number of multi-media features to his operating system. Since Craig is working on educational software based on OASES, he needed to be able to call on movie clips, other images and sound. First Craig showed us how he captures and uses animated images. He brought a video camera and captured the meeting scenes using VIDI ST hardware. VIDI ST is for ST computers only. The timing is critical, and it will not work on the faster TT or Falcon computers. Craig used a STe with 4 MB of RAM. However, a lot of storage is needed for the video sequences. So Craig connected a Zip drive using an ICD Link interface (that he got at our last swap and shop). And I believe that he booted the STe off the Zip drive too. Using a regular ST colour monitor, Craig also demonstrated OASES in low and medium resolution. It looked very good owing to the clever use of fonts. Next Craig showed his new Interactive Author software. With interactive Author Craig created an example interactive textbook. This example is a tutorial on using Interactive Author itself. The concept is reminiscent of the old programmed learning textbook system. Software like Interactive Author brings it up to date.

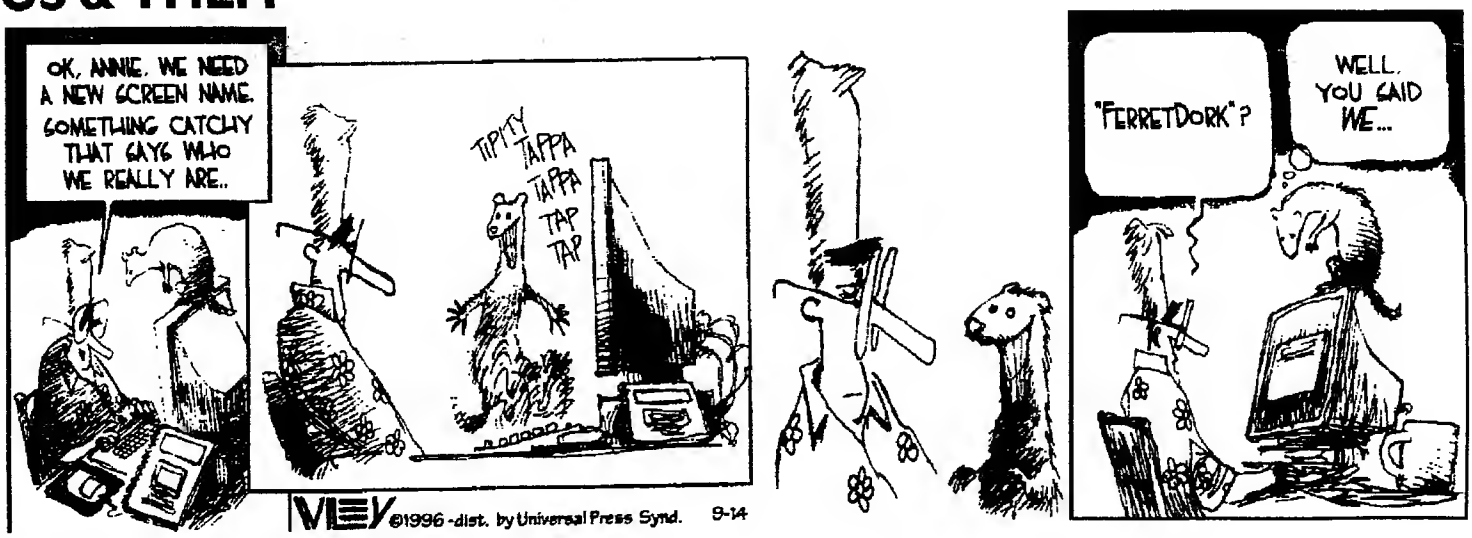
Newsletter expenses were discussed at the meeting. One of the main costs is postage, especially when the newsletter exceeds ten pages. The membership present agreed to pick up their newsletters at meetings to save on postage.



The newsletters will be labelled, so that unclaimed newsletters can be mailed. A "disk of the month" will also be prepared and sold for $2.00 to help in our cash flow. Most of the members present agreed to support this effort. We do make a small profit on our coffee too. For the last few months none of our North Saanich members have used our call-forward service to the Pothole BBS in Sooke. Therefore we have decided to discontinue the service. Gotta fight the deficit y'know.

The General Meeting in August featured a variety of demonstrations. First John Picken ran an amusing 8-bit program called Atari vs Commodore. It was done in BASIC by Chris Crawford. Very entertaining. It saw it first at a GCACE meeting almost ten years ago. And now both Commodore and Atari are gone. Next, Craig Carmichael showed us his latest creation for OASES, sprites. He had all kinds of coloured sprites drifting at random down the screen. It seems that at every meeting Craig has something new to show. Then Gordon Hooper showed us how he scans text and images using various hand scanners. The scanner must be moved very slowly over the text or image. OCR software will turn text into ASCII characters. He imported a page of text into Calamus, using this method. Images can also be scanned and saved in various formats. The rendering of the scanned data takes awhile, even in a Mega STe. Unfortunately we ran out of time before Gordon could complete his demonstration.

US & THEM



ST LIBRARY REPORT

Dead Cats & STuff!

by Ted Skrecky

Over the last two months I have been spending most of my spare time amusing myself by playing with my dead cat. I have spent over $1,000 on this cat and I am determined to get my money's worth out of it even if it is dead. Yup, I am talking about my Atari 64-bit multimedia game system, the Jaguar!

Doom is one of the all-time great PC computer games. Fortunately, the Tramiels at Atari somehow managed to sucker Id Software, the makers of Doom, to do a port-over of this fabulous, texture-mapped, blast-em-to-bits dungeon game for the Jaguar. I have a few cartridge games for the Jag which are good but Doom is easily the best. I have come to the conclusion that this is a highly addictive game because I know I have spent the last four months playing the same level over and over again. With most games, such as Bert & Ernie's Adventures in Lounge Lizard Land, if I get stuck on a certain level, I quickly shove the game in the bin marked "do not play again until after Gordon Hooper renounces the consumption of all alcoholic beverages". Anyways, Doom must be good as it keeps me coming back again and again for more punishment.

One thing I would like to mention is that at 9:35 pm on Saturday, September 21st, 1996, the unthinkable happened. No, I didn't decide to get married. This is actually much more important.... After months of hard work I have finally managed to complete level 12 of Doom! The Killer Tomatoes and the Barons of Beef tried their best to stop me but months of combat experience gave me the upper hand. This was such a great achievement for me that I had to reward myself with a slice of pumpkin pie and a glass of coke!

Not all of my efforts have been directed towards completing level 12 of Doom. I have been downloading ST files from an FTP site in Finland via the Internet. The site at ftp.funet.fi, directory: pub/atari, has a file index which has english descriptions for each file. Most FTP sites have only listings of filenames so places such as ftp.funet.fi and, of course, Umich, are of great interest to me as I at least have some idea of what the file I am downloading is about.

Although I have downloaded a number of files from the Finland site, I have not added any of these programs to the ST catalogue. The main problem is that all the programs I have aquired so far are all written in German. I may be wrong about this, but I seem to recall that our club meetings aren't conducted in German so this would suggest that German ST programs would fail to generate much interest. Despite some difficulties in locating programs written in English, I still have managed to add one new disk to the GCACE ST catalogue. With version 3.9 of the catalogue completed, our collection now totals 194 disks. That's all for this edition of the ST Library Report so I will end it all by listing the contents of the lastest disk and then wander back to my dead cat, vigorously pump its tail up and down a dozen times in order to get it going and start playing level 13 of Doom....

BITMASTR.LZH 5K #194-BitMaster Version 1.05. Creates & modifies special disk track formats.

BSQUAD.LZH 192K #194-Interesting role-playing, turn-based strategy space game.

BUBBLES.LZH 6K #194-Accessory. Bubbles screen saver by Digi Tallis.

COLSPACE.LZH 74K #194-Jeff Minter's light synthesiser for the Atari ST. Uses the function keys. Note: Place files on a disk in Drive A:.

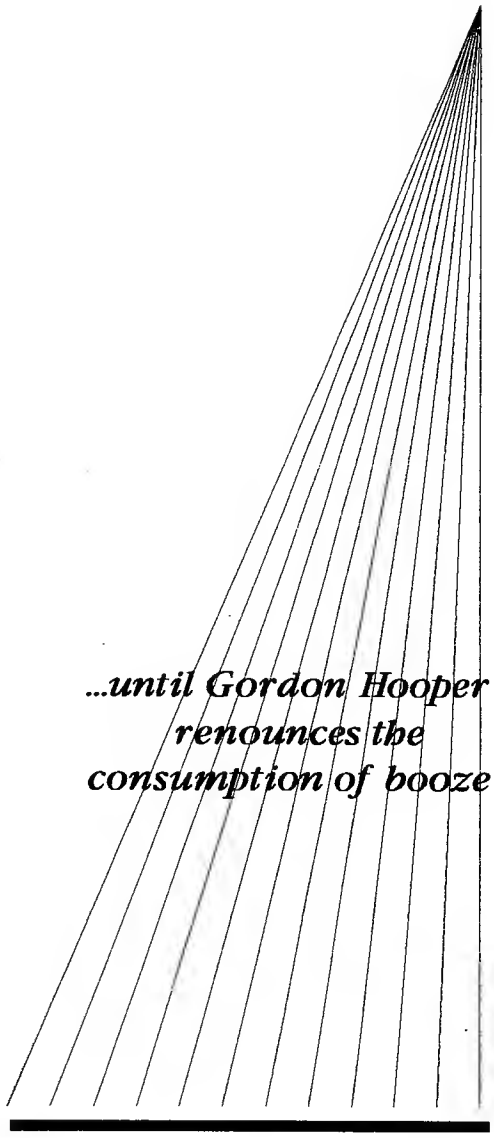
DSKCHK23.LZH 8K #194-Floppy Disk Checker Version 2.3.

FAITH.LZH 213K #194-The Faith Demo. Lots of very impressive visuals! Note: Place files in the main directory of a disk.

REQUIEM.LZH 12K #194-Cheat file for Silmaril's Robinson's Requiem game.

SNOWBALL.LZH 210K #194-Snowball Fight by Double Click Software. Rather fun 2 player game.

STFAQII.LZH 41K #194-"Simplified" Atari ST/STe & Falcon Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).



Ship

Continued from Page 3

sive incompatible home computer. It failed. Atari brought out an incompatible (with the ST) orphan game console called the Jaguar. This never caught on, partly due to the lack of software. It also failed. Then Atari failed. All the Tramiels have now is the results of a backroom court settlement with Sega. In retrospect I doubt even a cheap ST game console could have survived for long. When one looks at how computer companies have been doing it appears that software is significantly more profitable to peddle than hardware.